MARK BRADFORD

VERY POWERFUL LORDS

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The Devil Is Beating His Wife, 2003 (detail). Permanent wave end papers, billboard remnants, and stencils. 11 x 30 ft. (3.4 x 6.1 m). Collection of the artist; courtesy Lombard-Freid Fine Arts, New York

THERE'S AN ABSTRACTION THAT HAPPENS IN THE CITY WHICH INTERESTS ME. SIMULTANEOUS SHIFTS IN CULTURE AND MEANING WHEN YOU HAVE THE MEXICAN TAQUERIA NEXT TO THE BLACK WIG SHOP ACROSS THE STREET FROM THE VIETNAMESE NAIL SALON. —MARK BRADFORD[1]

YOU CANNOT STEP INTO THE SAME RIVER TWICE. FOR FRESH WATERS ARE EVER FLOWING IN UPON YOU. —ATTRIBUTED TO HERACLITUS (500 BCE)

In 1493, on Columbus's second voyage, the Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de León came to the Americas. In a series of voyages from his home port of San Juan, Puerto Rico, he discovered the Bahamas and Florida. Based on his discoveries, Spain claimed all of the territory south of Virginia to Key West, and west to the Mississippi. The driving force behind much of de León's explorations was his obsession with tales of the Fountain of Youth. This mythical fountain was reputed to flow with water that cured illness and granted eternal youth. Perhaps equally important to both the explorer and his king, it was also rumored to sit amidst a treasure of gold and silver.

Mark Bradford's commissioned installation in the gallery of the Whitney Museum at Altria, *Very Powerful Lords*, was inspired by a letter written by Juan Ponce de León in 1521 in which he implores the King of Spain to continue funding his explorations. The conquistador's quest for youth, beauty, territory, and wealth provided Bradford with a tapestry of ideas aptly related to contemporary society, given the persistence of these myths and the perpetuation of these desires. Consisting of a large-scaled wall painting and several sculptures made of manipulated found objects, the exhibition brings together culturally diverse notions of ritual with Eurocentric emblems of youth and pulchritude as manifested through systems of power and commerce.

For this installation, Bradford's materials are drawn largely from products and services designed to make one look or feel good via artificial enhancement—permanent press hair papers, signage promising the transformative potential of consumer products, linoleum flooring and checkered mats lifted from standard salon décor, bottled water, and the promotion of nature as a spiritual means to transcend the burdens of culture. Bradford has used our culture's driving desire for permanent youth and beauty (acknowledging that in contemporary Western culture, one must have youth or the appearance of youth to be considered beautiful) as the central anchor to his installation. He investigates cultural systems of power, hierarchy, and control, both of the past and the present.

Bradford's paintings recall formal aspects of modernism while being grounded in the urban materials of his Los Angeles community, a synthesis of art historical concerns and popular black aesthetics. His previous work, drawn more closely from his experience as a salon stylist, centered on investigations of ethnicity, beauty and artifice, and ritual and process. His signature painting process incorporates layers of singed permanent press end papers with synthetic polymer or cellophane hair dyes to create translucent washes of color. The final paintings recall the investigations of the grid characteristic

of modernist painting, such as that of Agnes Martin (whose work the artist often specifically references in titles such as *Pressin' Agnes*, and *On a Clear Day, I Can Usually See All the Way to Watts*), but invigorated with sociocultural content. Abstraction, for Bradford, becomes a semiotic vehicle to introduce an ambiguous interpretation of race and ethnicity. While the political issues of African-American hair have been extensively treated in contemporary art of the past decade, with hair functioning as a material stand-in for issues of racial representation, Bradford pushes the synecdoche a step further. By focusing on the processes and rituals associated with his community, the artist both celebrates and questions culturally determined stereotypes which, however, simultaneously provide the venue to express increasingly hybrid manifestations based on those definitions.

On a Clear Day, I Can Usually See All the Way to Watts, 2001 (detail). Mixed media on canvas, 72 x 84 in. (182.9 x 213.4 cm). Collection of Ninah and Michael Lynne; courtesy Lombard-Freid Fine Arts, New York

Pressin' Agnes, 2002. Permanent wave end papers and synthetic polymer on wall, 95 x 145 in. (241.3 x 368.3 cm). Collection of the artist; courtesy Susan Vielmetter L.A. Projects, Los Angeles

In Bradford's earlier works (left), his material sources and the textured, slightly scarred surface of the paintings suggested a type of skin. The work functions as a substitute for physical subjectivity, a presence-in-absence resembling the strategy of early-nineties artists' use of the painterly mark, text, or representational synecdoche to address issues of corporeality and the body. In the more recent paintings, however, the elegant spatial depth of his delicate, jittery grids has become increasingly interrupted by found-object elements—print media such as magazine images or poster text—that disrupt the purity of the painted surface and fix his works more firmly to specific material connotations.

Bradford's engagement with the aesthetic of a specific part of the black urban community also reflects his exploration of class and trade structures within neighborhoods dominated historically by specific ethnicities. "Until about 1950, Central Avenue and the southeast part of the city were the only places blacks, and, for that matter, Mexicans could live," he explains:

> *The housing covenants started lifting and the middle class fled to the northern and western parts of the city. The urban population became imbalanced. With the absence of the professional class, the dope man and the "gangsta" became the norm, as did out and out violence on any male who was "sissy" or other. The departure of the middle class holds a lot of historical importance because they became entrenched in a new integrated model that was more palatable to the mainstream white society, and inner-city style went virtually unnoticed until the entertainment industry tapped the commercial potential of "gangsta" rap. Gangsta rap made everybody pay attention to inner-city style, if only as a new site for colonization. But inner-city style has always been here, the skeleton in the closet now worth some money, but still hardly official or respected. I use the aesthetic of southeast Los Angeles to highlight that region and all it carries, not in a romantic sense but to explicate its tenacity and complexity. A hybridity from within a kind of boundedness.*[2]

In the Whitney exhibition, the large multipanel painting, *The Devil Is Beating His Wife* (2003), which occupies the gallery's back wall, functions as the visual anchor of the installation's multimedia elements. This new wall piece is Bradford's first which uses entirely "non-art" materials—the permanent press end papers, inexpensive fabric dye, and layers of found advertising posters and other local signage. Bradford's paintings have become increasingly scaled to the architectural environment; moving away from painting as an object, his current work more closely occupies the realm of mural. Issues of commerce, advertising, and material specificity are increasingly present in the mural, as Bradford more explicitly addresses his external environment.

Signage in particular plays a more prominent role in the painting's layered construction. While sustained viewing reveals the presence of such collage elements in his earlier work, here they take on a more active compositional presence. The painting is built up in visible layers, each remaining in traces of color or the physical thickness of the panel edges as the new layer is applied. The effect of this layering recalls the accumulation of posters and ads one often encounters on city streets, where a poster for a new rap artist lies beneath a beauty product ad, which in turn is covered by a sales announcement for the nearby liquor store. This process functions both as a formal device to achieve visual depth in the work, and also references Bradford's commitment to a truly hybrid notion of existence, that essential definitions—particularly racial or ethnic definitions—are no longer useful or accurate, if they ever were. The artwork encourages a rearticulated understanding between oneself and others, not a happy fusion of difference, but rather an insistence on the inextricable intersection of all aspects of identity.

The Devil Is Beating His Wife, 2003 (installation view). Permanent wave end papers, billboard remnants, and stencils. 11 x 20 ft. (3.4 x 6.1 m). Collection of the artist, courtesy Lombard-Freid Fine Arts, New York

The palette of the work's most visible layers moves away from the silvery blues, pinks, and yellows that characterized the shimmering surfaces of Bradford's earlier works, though like the posters peeking through, the blues and greens of the earlier layers (drawn from the palette of Monet's *Water Lilies* series) make appearances throughout. On the final layer, the translucent blacks and neon yellow are drawn from the familiar materials of police barriers and construction sites one often sees in a cityscape. The title refers to a black folk saying that describes the simultaneous occurrence of rain and sunshine. Building on the multivalence of material associations he is drawn to throughout his work, Bradford invokes the idea that media assume different meanings based on their context. "The signage in the hood is about something that is abandoned," Bradford explains,

> *The barricades that go up around burnt-out buildings, some of which are still not rebuilt from the 1992 riots. You learn quickly walking by these urban abstractions that within the walls of those abandoned buildings lie*

accumulated stories, half-forgotten but retaining an energy-in-waiting. White, upper class, neighborhoods, on the other hand, usually put up barricades around potentiality—renovation, new construction, that kind of thing. Money is coming in; those same barricades in some black neighborhoods are all about money done gone.[3]

The painting's layers function as a kind of urban archaeology, each stratum evoking a moment in the history of the local community while simultaneously addressing the reality of a more global history built upon the layers of its past, even when apparently cloaking or obliterating them. Describing the "ongoing erasure and rewriting of ownership that flows in the 'hood," Bradford reenacts the "constant collision of signs" that characterizes the fluid economies among culturally hybrid communities in relationship to larger trade models of a capitalist system.

Questioning commerce, a display wall of shelves lined with blue and clear water bottles glow and sparkle seductively, their curved contours unmarred by labels and their suggestively anthropomorphic forms enhanced with glimmering silver necklaces, champagne tags specially inscribed "Welcome." Entitled *Water Lilies* (2003), the work elaborates on the conflation of desire and commerce, its structure derived from the perfectly arranged shelves of a drugstore or cosmetics shop. The product saturation characteristic of capitalism is designed to entice the customer, not with the material object, but rather with its conceptual promise—the possibility of achieving the always-elusive perfection of youth and beauty. Again, Bradford engages the viewer in the actuality of our world, but troubles the neat consumer encapsulation that commodity transactions equal beauty and satisfaction. The late-twentieth-century craze for bottled water might in fact be seen as our updated version of belief in water's transformative properties: recalling everything from the physical benefits of the Fountain of Youth and the Baths of Vichy to culturally diverse examples of the spiritual healing power of sacred springs and wells ranging from ancient Greek or Hindu rituals and Native American rites to Christian baptism. Using the actual water bottles one can buy at any deli or drugstore, Bradford has transformed the products lining the shelves into a jewellike composition of blue-shaded transparencies, humorously titled after Monet's famous series depicting the Giverny gardens (itself an artificially transformed natural landscape). As part of Bradford's larger endeavor in *Very Powerful Lords*, *Water Lilies* plays with the boundaries of nature and culture, a waterfall of inexpensive plastic products promising access to purity and beauty, but offering only banality.

The shiny black linoleum covering the gallery floor is punctuated with checkered, hemispherical salon mats, reinforcing the construction as a stylized, artificial landscape. Streaks of neon yellow from the painting reflect in its surface as if on a body of water, while the mats double as floating lily pads. Bradford creates a total environment for the viewer to enter, but one that moves fluidly between inside and outside, reality and artifice, universal spirituality and local materiality. The central three-dimensional form, *Two Faced* (2003), is a structurally geometric wooden frame on which Bradford has mounted a slick, sharp tower of identical mirrored light boxes, each depicting the same idyllic natural landscape. Formally, the work recalls elements of Minimalist sculpture with its clean, mute form that theatrically engages the viewer with its physical presence in space. *Two Faced*'s serial construction and

repetition of forms also recalls minimalist strategies, particularly in Bradford's use of industrially produced objects. However, the light boxes are preexisting found objects, an updated Duchampian gesture that questions ideas of class and aesthetics. These kitschy, decorative objects might be found, for example, in inexpensive Asian restaurants, and tend to be associated with popular,

Water Lilies, 2003 (installation view). Water, plastic water bottles, champagne tags, and plastic shelving, dimensions variable Collection of the artist; courtesy Lombard-Freid Fine Arts, New York

rather than refined, taste. The transformation engendered by their placement in the gallery rests on their function as a kind of art form, questioning the relationship of class (as a complicated weave of ethnicity, education, and economics) and concurrent expectations of taste.

The image of a perfectly imagined waterfall, rocks, trees, and blue sky is backlit and motorized to suggest endless cascading, accompanied by its "natural" soundtrack of moving water and chirping birds. Its attempts to re-create the natural world actually distances it from reality. The manufactured artificiality of each light box functions to signify the idea of nature, rather than depict it in actuality. The dissonance between reality and artifice is not an opposition per se, but rather a vacillating coexistence in which one may take prominence at different moments. This dissonance is echoed in the boxes' sound. Bradford has manipulated the mechanism within the boxes so that each misses a beat now and then, creating syncopated music. This slightly disjunctive soundtrack and the blurring of sound clarity resulting from the cacophonous layering of multiple light boxes short-circuits the notion of an equivalence between their pictorial surfaces and the true existence of the utopian world they depict.

Though the light box images are utopian oases in which all human presence has been carefully excluded, Bradford's structure emphasizes the

Very Powerful Lords, 2003 (installation view). Mixed media, dimensions variable. Collection of the artist; courtesy Lombard-Freid Fine Arts, New York

inevitable egotism inherent in these conceptions of nature. Because the images in these light boxes are framed by mirrored surfaces, one cannot engage the piece without one's reflection literally framing this artificial scene. While the mirror is clearly the locus of superficial obsessions with self-image as it pertains to beauty and youth in contemporary culture, it also recalls water as the first reflective surface, the first means of understanding oneself as a discrete physical identity in the world, yet always one troubled by ideas of separation from self. The Greek myth of Narcissus, in fact—in which the protagonist was so captivated by the beauty of his own reflection (perceived as another person) that he wasted away at water's edge—is the original mirror-stage as defined by philosopher Jacques Lacan. The reflection provides an external image that gives rise to the mental representation of an individual self, but also establishes this entity as fundamentally dependent upon external objects. Isolating subjectivity in relationship to one's own recognition of perception "from the outside" establishes an interesting metaphor for the inside/outside simultaneity of Bradford's sculpture, which persists throughout the installation—the salon floor as a reflecting pool, the glittering bottles as waterfall, and the street poster as high art.

The idealized landscape portrayed in these light boxes—untouched by culture or by human hands—only underscores the artificiality of desire for a perfect, spiritually pure natural world. Like the Fountain of Youth, this notion of nature exists only as a cultural construction. Yet, the cinematic progression of repeated imagery in the stacked boxes builds an aesthetically evocative atmosphere, while the glowing blue light haloing the structure and its striking physical presence maintain the seductive possibilities of this mythic font of purity, transformation, and peace that persist in contemporary society. Despite the inconsistencies in this opposition between nature and culture, the desire to engage with a "purer" mode of existence manifests itself today in paradoxes such as the environment-destroying SUV, advertised to challenge raw roads and worlds it will never take on. As a sibling of the historical impulse for exploration and conquest, contemporary representations of the desire to reintegrate with nature—gear-laden retreats to the woods, the popularity of extreme traveling as a search for self, country houses in unspoiled villages and rustic summer escapes—are usually indicative of a system of power that privileges one culture or community over another. Bradford's work also evokes the notion of Nature associated with the exoticized Other—an elevation of and condescension to ethnic cultures regarded as direct or primal, from the pure pastoral of the noble savage, to the Zen garden of the spiritual Oriental.

On another level, *Two Faced*'s whimsical evocation of an actual fountain relates to the notion of material desire permeating the installation. Fountains can connote a kind of folly, a superstitious ritual of hopes turned into a monetary exchange—one throws a penny into the water as a symbol of the abstract wish, a less expensive version of offering material supplication to the gods to ensure the fulfillment of one's prayers. Above the sculpture, ropes of pennies twist into the lighting track, drooping down just into one's line of vision, wishes thrown and frozen in their trajectory. Ambiguously present, they recall the phrase "pennies from heaven," immortalized by Bing Crosby in a song describing the necessary coexistence of good with bad. In fact, the lyrics explicitly acknowledge a dependence on exchange to return the positive from

the negative: "No one appreciated a sky that was always blue. . . . So it was planned that they would vanish now and then, And you must *pay* before you get them back again. That's what storms were made for. . . . Every time it rains it rains/ pennies from heaven." Like the barricade reference in the painting, all yin requires—and is charged for—its yang.

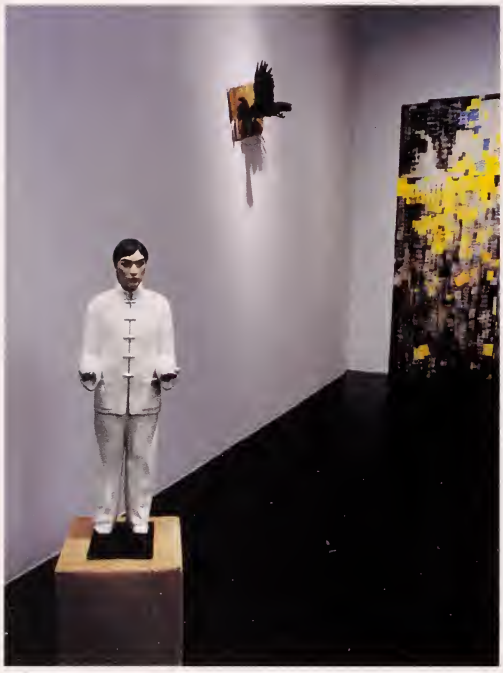
Bradford's current investigation expands beyond a racially specific, black/white opposition, addressing the hybrid cultural and economic exchanges of Asian and Latino communities in Los Angeles. He has explored these issues in earlier works such as *China Silk* (2001), in which he foregrounded the oddities of ethnic trade by weaving Chinese hair (the predominant source for hair extensions, generally imported and sold by Korean immigrant merchants to black women) onto the heads of Korean-American women. In another multimedia piece exploring ethnicity, class, and community, *Hooked Up* (2002), Bradford brought plaster sculptures of hands clasped in prayer to different nail salons along a particular Los Angeles boulevard, and had each salon add artificial tips adorned with their most popular design. Together, the sculptures track the mix of different communities comprising Bradford's neighborhood, while neatly encapsulating ideas of ethnocentric taste and class assumptions with the jarring visual contrasts of the bright, flashy nails against the white plaster.

Hooked Up (#1, 2, 3), 2002. Cast plaster with acrylic fingernails, 12 x 9 x 5 in. (30.5 x 22.9 x 12.7 cm) each. Collection of Nancy and Joel Portnoy; courtesy Lombard-Freid Fine Arts, New York

In *Very Powerful Lords*, the relationship to local specificity and universal paradigms of trade and beauty is further considered in the diptych *Asian Man and Crow* (2003). Bradford found the statue locally at the same Korean wholesaler in his neighborhood where he buys other materials for his work. For this installation, Bradford selected his materials from goods "found in the stalls of the Korean merchant and purchased by blacks and Latinos" in urban communities. Here, the found statuette, stereotypically clad in a simple white garment (martial arts-cum-Buddhist-priest pajamas) poses with his hands out, welcoming you into a pseudo-spiritual garden of earthly delights. Like the light box sculpture, the artificiality of this construct is clear. The artist was also struck by the stylized gesture of the "wise Asian" as a kind of reversal of the subservient posture of a black lawn jockey sculpture, another familiar, racially typed form.[4] Again, Bradford shifts between layers of micro- and macrocosmic meaning, commenting on the Eurocentric fetish of Orientalism and pseudo-spirituality while also making a connection between the often tense relationships that exist between blacks and Koreans in his own community.

Bradford's choice of a taxidermied crow—a real animal made permanently fake—symbolically recalls the shifting superimposition of meaning and history made literal in the painting's surface. As is typical of Bradford's work, the web of ideas that reside in each piece is selectively enhanced by the presence of other objects—the product shelves of water take on aspects of a waterfall when seen against the fountain, the floor becomes a representation of a watery environment as the painting reflects in its depths, and yet remains

a salon because of its material sources. That the crow functions as a diptych with the figurine of the Asian man suggests the coexistence of these alternate meanings, and enforces the ethnic hybridity of Bradford's community. The crow has its own hybrid identity, with vastly different meanings in different cultures and times. In most contemporary Western cultures, the crow symbolizes negative omens, even death, though it has also historically embodied positive concepts such as love and filial devotion and has functioned as everything from the savior of humanity, to a divine messenger or the personification of the Supreme Being.[5]



Asian Man and Crow, 2003 (installation view). Taxidermied crow, plastic statue, and cardboard, dimensions variable. Collection of the artist; courtesy Lombard-Freid Fine Arts, New York

Of course, the figure of the black crow also recalls other racially charged connotations. The term Jim Crow is believed to have originated around 1830 as a minstrel show character. By the eve of the Civil War, Jim Crow was one of many stereotypes of black inferiority in the popular culture of the day.[6] The words became a racial slur in the vocabulary of many whites; and by the end of the century, legal acts of racial discrimination toward blacks were often referred to as Jim Crow laws.

The illusion of the taxidermied bird in flight crashing through the gallery wall is undermined by the presence of the cardboard packing to which it was clearly affixed for transport; similarly, the revelation of the mechanisms of the light boxes and the wooden support structure of *Two Faced* allow for constructs to coexist with illusion. The generic Asian man statuette extends his hand in welcome, perhaps, standing somewhat askew atop a box resembling the cardboard packing in which it may have arrived. Linked to the conglomeration of products underlying the materials of the overall installation, the cardboard box/pedestal also refers to art as consumption, to post-Warholian politics of the commodity. Throughout the installation, Bradford is clearly interested in the meeting of desires with products designed to appeal to them.

The clear, though delicate, relationship between the works in this diptych have the ambiguous connections characteristic of Bradford's approach. His work is deeply invested in the ephemeral, the fluid imperfections of reality, and the notion of what one might call the "almost real." The tonally ambiguous, fleeting sensibility of his work can be linked aesthetically and philosophically to Fluxus, a loosely defined mid-twentieth-century aesthetic movement that conjoined the works of experimental artists, architects, composers, and designers in an attempt to give form to the Heraclitean philosophy of flux. The ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus first articulated the idea of impermanence as a condition of existence, where reality is thus defined as a succession of transitory states. Fluxus artists drew on notions of musical improvision and play to create ephemeral, experimental activites and "products" that proposed an alternative system of art-making. Like the Fluxists, Bradford's conceptual approach centers on the ephemeral nature of being, what he calls "the musicality of becoming," and the eternal spontaneity of the present. Though his

emblematic quote implies otherwise, fire was Heraclitus's symbol of this notion of perpetual change; in *Very Powerful Lords*, Bradford has taken its opposite, water, as literal and metaphoric fluidity.

Bradford has constructed a landscape occupied by influences ranging from the economics of trade and European colonial conquest to black folklore, style, and baptism. Like Heraclitus, he focuses on the "flux and fire" of contemporary existence, rather than attempting to believe in an essential condition. Sliding effortlessly between issues of local and universal interpretation, Bradford is explicitly of his moment, in which the classically modernist era of binary logic is over: no real against artificial, no we against them, no self against other, no inside against outside. As with his approach to ethnicity, Bradford does not address these questions as dichotomies. Instead, he has disturbed the secure definitions of these concepts as opposites. As boundaries are pierced and parameters made more fluid, one wonders if the resulting hybridity might provide possibilities for emancipatory subversion through the transformation of identity from an internal essentialism to a transgression of borders. Bradford's work is grounded in our empathetic relationship to the abstract notions of beauty and power that govern, to some extent, all of our lives. His installation encourages us to reflect on our own personal engagement with these "very powerful lords" that have defined the world, and urges us to challenge them.

1 Email conversations with the artist, July 2003.

2 Interview with Eungie Joo, "Free Trade," Summer–Fall 2002, http://www.pomona.edu/ADWR/Museum/exhibits/20022003/bradford/joo.shtml

3 Email conversations with the artist, July 2003.

4 An example of a co-opted form is the lawn jockey, which typically depicted a blackface figure dressed in jockey's clothing, one hand in his pocket and the other reaching out a ring on which to tie one's horse—precipitated the racial slur "lawn jockey" to refer derogatorily to African-American men, particularly when trying to indicate subservience. But in the first half of the nineteenth century, escaping slaves understood then that the jockey statue would guide them to safe houses along the Underground Railroad and to freedom.

5 For ancient Celts, the crow was the evil counterpart to the swan's symbolic purity. In ancient Greece the crow was replaced by the owl as Athena's companion for being too gossipy. In the Bible the crow's selfishness keeps him from reporting to Noah that the flood was over, and in India's *Mahabharata*, the messengers of death are likened to crows. In many nomadic cultures, however, the crow assumes a positive meaning, particularly in Native American myths. In some tribes, the crow resides as the divine protagonist of creationist myths; in others, it is he who steals the sun to provide it for humanity. In yet others, he is the personification of the Supreme Being. Similarly, in Scandinavia, a pair of crows often symbolized the principle of creation. His role in Asiatic cultures is also largely positive—showing love and filial devotion. In Chinese legend the crow becomes the source of the world's light—the solar symbol and creative principle—while in Japanese mythology, the crow is often a divine messenger.

6 A white, minstrel show performer, Thomas "Daddy" Rice, blackened his face with charcoal paste or burnt cork and danced a ridiculous jig while singing the lyrics to the song, "Jump Jim Crow." Rice created this character after seeing a black slave dancing and singing a song ending with these chorus words. "Weel about and turn about and do jis so, Eb'ry time I weel about I jump Jim Crow." Some historians believe that a Mr Crow owned the slave who inspired Rice's act—thus the reason for the Jim Crow term in the lyrics. In any case, Rice incorporated the skit into his minstrel act, and by the 1850s the "Jim Crow" character had become a standard part of the minstrel show in America.

MARK BRADFORD

Born in 1961 in Los Angeles, Mark Bradford received his MFA and BFA from the California Institute of the Arts. Bradford lives in Los Angeles and has exhibited his work in solo exhibitions including Pomona College Museum of Art, Claremont, California; Patricia Faure Gallery, Santa Monica; Lombard-Freid Fine Arts, New York; and the Luggage Store Gallery, San Francisco. His work has also been featured in group exhibitions at such venues as ARCO 2003, Madrid; UCLA Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston; The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; and Greene Naftali, New York.

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This brochure accompanies the exhibition *Mark Bradford: Very Powerful Lords*, organized by Shamim M. Momin, branch director and curator, Whitney Museum of American Art at Altria.

All photographs by George Hirose except *On a Clear Day, I Can Usually See All the Way to Watts* and *Hooked Up* by Becket Logan, and *Pressin' Agnes* by Gean Ogami

COVER: *Two Faced*, 2003 (installation view). Mirrored light boxes and wood, approximately 22 x 39 x 120 in. (55.9 x 99.1 x 304.8 cm). Collection of the artist; courtesy Lombard-Freid Fine Arts, New York

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